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"RECKLESS RALPH" AND "WILD BILL" VISIT THE GRAVE OF GENERAL HENRY KNOX

by W. M. Burns

Yes, it actually happened, (believe it or not), and it happened in this way.

My old friend, Ralph Cummings was again called to Maine by the death of an uncle in Portland, Me. So afterward he came on to Rockland to spend a few days with an aunt of his that lives here. And of course I insisted that he spend a little of that time with me. So I had him with me for an entire day and night. If I had owned a car I would have shown Ralph some very interesting parts of Maine, many of them rich in historical lore. But lacking a car I decided that we visit Thomaston. Maine where our State Prison is located and where is located the grave of that Revolutionary hero and patriot, Gen. Henry Knox. So during the forenoon, "Reckless' and I wandered around the streets of Rockland, with me trying to show him our Public Buildings. We viewed the Knox County Hospital. The Knox County Courthouses and Jail, the local Community Building (built by WPA), the City Building and the huge foundations of what will eventually be a huge Art Gallery, Museum and Library, bequeathed to the city of Rockland, on the death of Rocklands only millionaire. A woman by the way, named Lucy Farnsworth. The bulk of her million or more went to a bank in Boston. Not a near relative to inherit, and Rockland le't only this Museum-Art Gallery-Library as a monument to their only millionaire. But it will be a fine building costing thousands of dollars, aside from its priceless contents,

So after our looking our little city "Reckless" decided over. that he wanted to do a little shopping for post cards. He sure is a post-card fiend in addition to his love for dime novels. So we visited various ten cent stores and bookstores where "Reckless" purchased various 'Maine' cards. Then home to 15 Cottage St. for lunch and then boarded a bus for Thomaston Maine (only 4 miles from here). We planned first to go through the State Prison but got instead into the Prison Show Room, directly across the street from the Prison.

Here we saw wonderful productions, all hand made by the prisoners, for sale. Some of the most wonderful furniture such as office desks, chairs, stools, etc. Wonderful toys made out of wood, and paintings. You should see those paintings, part oil and canvass, part wood. (Ask "Reckless.") All these items for sale, and money received for each item goes to the prisoner that makes it.

On coming out of the Show Room we asked a "trusty" of the Prison, if visitors were admitted on Saturday. His reply was, "No visitors on Saturday, Sunday or Holidays, unless you have relatives in there, or are a special friend of the Warden."

Well, "Reckless" and I had no friends in there, nor were either of us friends of the Warden. So we did not get to go through the Maine State Prison. I was greatly disappointed as I had planned to show to "Reckless" how much better our ONE State Penitentlary was conducted, than the

many in his own state of Massachusetts. However, I swallowed my disappointment and we started out to find the grave of that Revolutionary hero, Gen. Henry Knox.

As a lad, I once lived in Thomaston for two years. This was over 30 years ago. I then once visited the grave of Gen. Knox. But to find it again after a period of 30 years, I could not, Kindly remember that Thomaston is one of the oldest towns in Maine. Over 200 years old. So of course a very large cemetary for a small town. So after wandering around for a long time up and down long avenues of the dead, I finally admitted to "Reckless" that it was beyond me to find the grave. So we gave it up and came out on the street. And there I met a lady that I stopped and asked if she could tell us where the Gen. Knox grave was. She did know, and directed us exactly how to find it. It was on the avenue that we had last traversed in coming out of the cemetary. But way back from the avenue itself. So far back that we had to cross several private burial lots to reach it.

There in a humble, very humble, lot we found the last resting place of that fine old hero, Gen. Henry Knox. There are buried the General, his wife, one or two children and a few "in-laws."

The lot itself is a disgrace to the town of Thomaston, a disgrace to the whole county of Knox, a disgrace to the State of Maine, a disgrace to the whole nation. A very modest monument only 4-5 foot high and of the 1806 period (date of Knox death). Foundations of the monument decaying and falling in. A granite wall around the lot about one foot high all falling in. Not a direct path or avenue leading to the lot.

Thus is the last resting place of our first Secretary of War, Gen. Henry Knox. A personal, and loved friend of Gen. Geo. Washington, so highly respected by the latter that he insisted that Knox accept the post of Secretary of War in his first Cabinet

Now to digress a bit. After the Revolutionary, Gen. Knox, born in Boston, saw fit to bring to Thomaston, Maine, his family. Thomaston at that time was a fast growing little settlement, one of the earliest in Maine. So he came there and built a real

mansion that he named "Montpelier." And after serving as first Secretary of War, he came back to Thomaston and ended his days there.

One hundred or more years ago, the original "Montpelier" had either fallen down, burnt down, or been torn down. (My information is vague here). Anyway it disappeared. A few years ago the D. A. R., I think it was (not sure however), erected, about one half mile from the original site, a perfect replica in every way of "Montpelier", furnished with more than half of the original Knox belongings, which were donated to it, by descendants of the Knox family and by various Museums throughout New England. Other furnishings are all genuine antiques of that period. Yes, "Reckless" and I saw all of "Montpelier" also. A whole lot of the Generals effects, including his sword. But what impressed me most was the very tall "grandfathers clock" owned by the General. Located on the first landing of the grand staircase. Still going, still keeping perfect time in spite of the fact that it must be over 200 years old.

In many of the rooms on the first floor were TWO fireplaces. And 1 think that one or two of the larger sleeping rooms on the second floor were likewise equipped with two fireplaces. On going through these rooms, aside each fireplace, was a large copper utensil resembling a "corn-popper" with a long wooden handle. I had noticed that "Reckless" was noting every one of them as we went from room to room. Now here's the joke on "Reckless". (He may omit it in publishing this article).

Finally he asked me, "Bill, what are those things beside each fireplace that so resemble a huge "corn-popper" and are they really corn poppers?"

I explained to him that they were bed warmers. And bed warmers they actually were. I explained to "Reckless" that in those days before stoves, that in spite of fireplaces, sleeping rooms were often terribly cold. So some good soul of that era invented "bed warmers." Live coals from the fireplace were raked into this "bed warmer" and the "bed warmer" slowly shoved around under the blankets and quilts until the bed was thus thoroughly warmed. Then one would hop into a warm bed. But I fear that un-

less one awakened several times thruout the night and threw a few more logs on the fireplace, they must have been pretty cold before morning. As our Maine climate in those days was a vigorius one, far more so, than in the present generation. I have read, and have been told, that in those days it was not uncommon to have the temperature, in winter, at below zero, for weeks at a time. But for some unexplained reason, we do not have these rigorous winters any more; at least, not to that extent.

Well, we finally got to the basement of the mansion. Brick floors throughout the entire basement. And here were the kitchens. In the main kitchen was a huge fireplace some seven or eight feet long and about four feet in depth, with huge "Dutch ovens" on each side. A long iron rod ran lengthwise from side to side of the fireplace with huge iron kettles and tea-kettles strung along it. And in the kitchens were huge copper and brass kettles, holding from five to ten gallons each. Plus various other cooking utensils of that era, too numerous to mention here. Off the kitchens was a huge room at least 40x20 which I conclud-

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ed was a storeroom for the fireplace logs to be used in winter. But at present used as a sort of museum. Under glass, can be seen there souvenirs, relics and genuine antiques of all generations. Not a part of the Knox collection, but very interesting nevertheless. In this lot what impressed us both most was a human skull. Not a white skull as skulls should be, but a dirty very dark brown color, almost black. It seemed to me to be a bit larger than skulls should be. Unfortunately, the explanatory tag attached to it was in reverse, so we could not read the information on it.

After going through this famous memorial to a great hero, we finally got back to Rockland.

An evening spent with "Reckless," looking over my novels, and discussing novels and novel collectors in general, ended a very happy day in my life; a day spent in the companionship of my old friend of many years, "Reckless" Ralph Cummings.

-W. M. Burns

NEWSY NEWS by Ralph F. Cummings

Hermon O. Rawson memorial dedicated on Sunday Morning Oct. 20th,

Dave Adams wants to buy

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Don Learnard and myself visited a number of book stores in Boston, and found some novels that were hidden away since the old days. We also met Frank Wilson too. Thanks to Don and his folks for everything, while I was there.

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